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Spring of Hope

MUCH national soul-searching is going on in Congress, among political leaders generally, in the press, from the pulpit, and wherever thoughtful people gather, centering around the role of a free society attempting to cope with the challenge of a closed totalitarian society in a cold war.

For example, there are rumblings of a shake-up in the Central Intelligence Agency in the wake of the Cuban invasion attempt that failed.

There is the question of the CIA's continued role in government. Is it to be strictly an intelligence-gathering operation or is it to engage also in semi-military operations as it evidently did in the Cuban invasion attempt?

Can the press (in which category radio and television must be included) really foreclose discussion and publication of information which, while it may prove embarrassing to the Administration and the country, is necessary for the political life of a free people? Where can the line be drawn really, and who is capable of deciding where to draw the line?

Can Congress exercise its best judgment on legislation, particularly the legislation of appropriations, if only a handful of members have even a rudimentary knowledge of what a government agency does — especially an agency such as the CIA which has a budget estimated to run anywhere from one to two billion dollars a year? And yet can a man like Allen Dulles perform the duties he has been called upon to perform if he must be hauled before congressional committees to explain what he has been doing?

These are basic questions to a democracy faced with a challenge to its survival in an undeclared war, one no less vicious for being undeclared.

This is a period of national self - examination at home and abroad. Thoughtful Americans express concern not only over the deteriorating international situation but also over the evidences of a moral breakdown at home—the quiz riggings, the scandal of the regulatory agencies, bid-rigging in violation of antitrust laws, the unmet and sometimes even unrecognized needs in education, the pockets of chronic economic distress, the nagging percentage of unemployment, the heedless waste and despoliation of our natural resources and even, in some cases, the declining quality of American - made products.

Does our national affluence, then, rest upon a jerry - built structure? This is a question explored by popular sociologists and others who themselves have become affluent by examining and popularizing the ills of U. S. society.

Taking the optimistic view, it is possible to state that unless the evils are diagnosed, they can never be cured. Much has been said to the effect that ours is a complacent, a "completed" society. There is daily evidence that this is not a completed society and that there is little room for complacency.

It was never more true to say that this generation of Americans has a rendezvous with destiny. Perhaps, before the spring tide of new achievements, in a world order based on freedom and justice, must come the winter of our discontent. The point is, no prudent man stands around in freezing weather without a coat doing nothing. That way, he may catch his death before spring ever comes.

This editorial also appeared in the following other newspaper :

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